

REMARKS

Restriction Requirement

Applicants herein acknowledge the restriction requirement in the above-referenced application. Claims 1 through 51 are currently pending in the application. The Office has identified the following groups of claims as being drawn to separate inventions:

Group I – Claims 1 and 2, drawn to a pressure compensated core barrel apparatus, classified in class 175, subclass 403;

Group II – Claims 3-14, 42 and 43, drawn to a piston assembly for providing a fluid seal within an inner barrel assembly of a core barrel apparatus and the method of providing the seal, classified in class 166, subclass 153;

Group III – Claims 15-18, drawn to a valve assembly, classified in class 166, subclass 316;

Group IV – Claims 19-21, and 44-46, drawn to a near-bit swivel assembly for supporting an inner barrel assembly within an outer barrel and the method for supporting the barrel assembly, classified in class 175, subclass 320; and

Group V – Claims 22-41, and 48-51, drawn to a sponge layer, the means and method for securing that layer in the barrel apparatus and methods for using the sponge layer, classified in class 175, subclass 425.

Applicants respectfully note that claim 47, which is an independent claim, was not addressed in the restriction requirement, but it appears that claim 47 may be appropriately grouped with Group V. Acceptance of this suggestion for grouping of claim 47 is respectfully requested.

Applicants hereby elect the claims of Group V, claims 22-41 and 47 (if approved by the Examiner, 48 if not) through 51, without traverse. Applicants reserve the right to pursue the subject matter of nonelected Groups I, II, III and IV as well as that of claim 47 if not included by the Examiner in Group V, in one or more divisional applications.

Please Note Information Disclosure Statement

Applicants wish to draw the Examiner's attention to the Information Disclosure Statement filed with the Office on August 27, 2003, and respectfully request that the documents or other information referenced therein be made of record in the present application and that an initialed copy of the PTO-1449 form be returned to the undersigned attorney evidencing same.

Should any of the documents, or portions thereof, be unavailable to the Examiner for any reason, please contact the undersigned attorney, who will supply same immediately by facsimile or other suitable method of delivery.

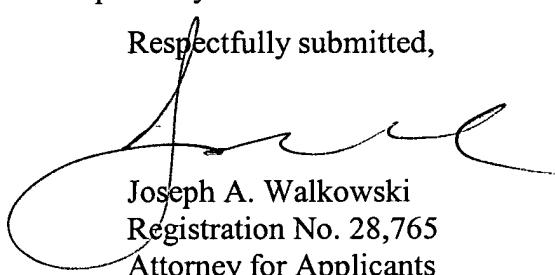
Preliminary Amendment

Applicants' undersigned attorney notes the filing herein of a Preliminary Amendment on December 12, 2003, which filing was not acknowledged in the outstanding Office Action. Should the Preliminary Amendment have failed for some reason to have been entered in the Office file, Applicants' undersigned attorney will be happy to have a true copy thereof hand-delivered to the Examiner.

CONCLUSION

An early Office Action on the merits is respectfully solicited.

Respectfully submitted,



Joseph A. Walkowski

Registration No. 28,765

Attorney for Applicants

TRASKBRITT

P.O. Box 2550

Salt Lake City, Utah 84110-2550

Telephone: 801-532-1922

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JAW/dlm:ljb

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